



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

THE  
DAILY SACRIFICE  
AND  
PUBLIC DEVOTIONS  
OF THE  
CHURCH.  

---

BY REV. DR. TODD.



600095014P







**THE DAILY SACRIFICE,**  
**AND**  
**PUBLIC DEVOTIONS OF THE CHURCH.**



THE DAILY SACRIFICE,  
AND  
PUBLIC DEVOTIONS OF THE CHURCH.

FOUR LECTURES.

BY WILLIAM GOWAN TODD, D.D.

---

"Nobiscum offeratur qui pro nobis oblatus est. Sic enim vespertino sacrificio  
vita vetus interficitur, et diluculo nova oritur."—S. AUG. SERM. 142.

---



DUBLIN:  
JAMES DUFFY, 15, WELLINGTON-QUAY;  
LONDON: 22, PATERNOSTER-ROW.  
1865.

100. g. 114.





DUBLIN:

Printed by J. B. O'Coole and Son,  
6 AND 7, ST. BRUNSWICK ST.

## CONTENTS.

---

LECTURE	PAGE
I. THE DAILY SACRIFICE; THE SECRET OF THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH . . . . .	1
II. THE VESPER OFFICE . . . . .	15
III. BLESSING AND BENEDICTION . . . . .	30
IV. DEVOTION TO THE B. V. MARY . . . . .	48



## P R E F A C E .

---

THE following Lectures are chiefly intended for the instruction of young persons just entering into life. It is of great importance that, when they become their own masters, they should form for themselves good religious habits, which will serve them in time of trial and temptation all their days. Sometimes I have noticed that young persons, however carefully brought up, imagine to themselves that they fulfil all the duties of piety when they assist at a single Mass on Sundays. These Lectures have for their object to encourage a more generous and a higher devotion, and to point out the great blessings and advantages which result from attendance on the Daily Mass and the Public Offices of the Church.

*Feast of S. Michael and All Angels, 1864.*

GREENWICH.

•

•

•

•

•

•

## LECTURE I.

---

# THE MASS; THE SECRET OF THE CHURCH'S STRENGTH.

---

ST. LUKE, XXII. 19.

“Do this for a commemoration of Me.”

I. WHEN the Israelites had occupied the land of Chanaan, they were surrounded by a host of enemies, who sought their destruction with unceasing pertinacity. The Philistines were the most troublesome of those enemies. They left nothing undone in order to destroy the people of God. They took possession of the Ark of the Covenant; they introduced their own corrupt morals and practices amongst a people to whom God Himself had given a pure and holy law; they persuaded the weak amongst them to imitate their own idolatry; not unfrequently they held the whole nation in political subjection; and they would have ultimately succeeded in driving them out of the land, had

not the Almighty raised up, from time to time, judges and saviours to rescue them out of the hands of their foes. Amongst others, He raised up Samson, whose preternatural strength rendered him the terror and the vanquisher of all the enemies of his people. The Philistines strove, by every means, to get him into their power; but in vain. If he entered one of their cities, the report was soon noised abroad, and they immediately surrounded the house wherein he was, keeping guard at the gate of the city, and "watching there all the night in silence, that in the morning they might kill him as he went out. But Samson slept till midnight, and then rising, he took both the doors of the gate, with the posts thereof, and the bolt, and, laying them on his shoulders, carried them up to the top of the hill, which looketh towards Hebron."\* And when the men of Juda, through a cowardly dread of their masters, bound Samson, and delivered him into the hands of the Philistines, as their descendants bound Jesus, the true strength of Israel, and delivered Him into the hands of Pilate and Herod, "the spirit of the Lord came strongly upon him, and as the flax is wont to be consumed at the approach of fire, so the bands

\* Judges, xvi. 2, 3.

with which he was bound were broken and loosed.”\* His enemies marvelled at his preternatural strength; they foamed and raged, not only because he escaped their snares, but because he was the instrument of the divine vengeance which pursued the persecutors of God's people. They felt that there was some hidden power upon which that strength depended. They knew that there must be some secret source of a power so completely preternatural, but for a long time they were baffled in their attempts to unravel the mystery. It was Samson himself who disclosed to his heathen wife the secret of his religious consecration, and she revealed it to the Philistines. Then Samson, having lost his strength, became in their hands feeble as a child. They bound him, and he could no longer burst his bonds; they put out his eyes; they made a mock of him; he was the subject of their scorn and derision in the midst of their coarse festivities. And thus the mighty champion of Israel, the secret of his strength having been treacherously disclosed, lay blind and helpless in the dungeons of the Philistines. Now, what Samson was to the people of Israel, the Church is to poor human nature. Left to itself, human nature has no chance against the mighty foes that assail it.

\* Judges, xv. 14.



Its own weakness renders it an easy prey to the powerful enemies that are ever seeking its ruin. Temptations the most various, and the most difficult to resist, come upon it from every side; the world, the flesh, and the devil give it neither rest nor respite night and day. Left to itself, it must fall. It needs some arm to lean on—some support external to itself. And Almighty God has provided all this in the unity, the faith, the teaching, and the sacraments of the Church. Hence, the hatred with which the Church is regarded by all that is opposed to God. The Church is the champion of human nature—a champion who has never yet been overcome, and who never will be. And this is the reason why, in every age of the Church's existence, "the Gentiles have raged, and the people have devised vain things. The kings of the earth have stood up, and the princes met together against the Lord and against His Christ."\* All that the ingenuity and malice of the evil one could suggest has been tried against the Church, and tried in vain. Its destruction has been essayed by open persecution, and by secret treachery; it has been driven from place to place over the whole earth; the sword of the destroyer has slain its chief pastors, its priests,

\* Ps. ii. 1.

may, even its most tender and delicate children. Powerful nations have risen in rebellion against its authority, and refused to allow it any more to rule over them: the most insidious snares have been laid in order to entrap the unwary, or to induce its pastors to betray their trust. Whatever the craft and malignity of the enemy could effect against the Spouse of Christ, and the witness for truth, has been done with the utmost skill and willingness; and yet all in vain. The Church has stood its ground, firm as the rock on which it is built. It is not only unconquered, but it goes forth to conquer. Driven from one place, it occupies another. Crushed and trodden down in particular countries, in those very regions it rises again, fresh and fair as the morning. It has a secret source of strength which the world is unable to reach. How often do we hear men wonder at the marvellous vitality of the Catholic Church! Even in this nineteenth century, when a wide-spread apostacy within and without has conspired together for its overthrow, its most deadly foes are obliged to confess, that at no period of its eventful career was it ever so firm, so compact, so united, so full of life and vigour. And they marvel whence this vitality can proceed. What is the secret of its strength and unity? How is it that it

understands the progress of time, the combinations of its foes, the defections of its children? How is it that it not only passively resists attack, but is an active and successful aggressor against the world? But they are unable to give an answer; like the Philistines, they are baffled. They are conscious that there is a secret connected with its strength, which, however, they cannot discover. They are, therefore, always on the watch for some one to betray the Church, and to disclose to them the secret of its strength, that, as the Philistines did with Samson, they may do with it—namely, by cutting off its strength at its source, render it feeble and powerless, that so it may the more easily become a prey to their scorn and hatred.

Now, I will act towards the Church as Samson's wife acted towards him—that is, I will reveal the secret of its strength. I will tell its enemies what they must cut off—what they must destroy—if they wish to prevail against the Church. There is this difference between the case of Samson and that of the Church: by revealing the secret of Samson's strength, Dalila betrayed her husband and co-operated to his ruin; in revealing the secret of the Church's strength, we magnify the power and goodness of God, whose promise has rendered the Church

invincible to the assaults of all its enemies. And, therefore, in declaring the secret wherein lieth her strength, I am promoting the divine glory, and doing the very work which the Church wishes me to do. Well, then, the source and fountain of the Church's unconquerable strength lies in the daily Sacrifice of the Mass. Thence it is that she draws her marvellous vitality. This is the key to all her supernatural power and energy. If it were possible, which, thanks be to God, it is not, to destroy the Sacrifice of the Mass, the Church itself would fall at once—the gates of hell would have prevailed against it. A church without the Holy Sacrifice is like the human body without a living heart and soul. It may have the outward semblance of a church, but, alas! it is merely a phantom; it may be fair to look on, but it is only the pale, cold beauty of death. Nothing can exceed in taste and faultless exactness the restorations of the ancient cathedrals of England, made within the last few years. In almost every minute ornament and decoration, they reproduce the old buildings in their most Catholic days; the very walls, as it were, speak of the Catholic Church. But it is the silent language of the grave—you are reminded of “the first day of death,” when, as you gaze on the corpse of the

departed, calm, still, and placid, you almost seem to perceive the gentle heaving of the heart, as if the dead were alive. So it is with those ancient cathedrals. They are Catholic in their beauty, but it is the beauty of death; they want life; they are a body without a soul; they have no altars and no sacrifice. Christ is not present in what was once His own house; the destroyer has been at work, and, having expelled the Sacrifice, he has taken away the source and fountain of life. They are, therefore, types and symptoms of every communion, which, professing to be Christian, has nevertheless cast off the great Sacrifice of the Christian Church. They may have the outward semblance of the Church, but they are without a soul and without life.

And the reason of this is evident. All our Christianity comes from the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and has its centre there. The Sacrifice of Calvary is the fountain-source of our religion. It is the propitiation for our sins; it reconciles us to God; it hides us from His wrath within the sacred wounds of Jesus; it washes us in His precious blood; it procures for us the favour, the blessing, and the grace of God, both to expiate the past and to prepare for the future. Apart from the Sacrifice of the Cross, there is no Christianity. The Sacrifice of

the Cross is to the religion of Christ what the light and heat of the sun is to the physical creation around it; without it, "all is void and empty, and there is darkness upon the face of the deep." Now, the Sacrifice of the Mass is the representation and continuation of the one Sacrifice once offered; it is Calvary continued and perpetuated in the Church. The priest is the same; the victim is the same. There is a difference in the mode of offering, but this difference does not change the nature of the sacrifice. It is the same body broken, and the same blood shed, which daily is presented before the throne of God, to give Him the supreme honour due to His holy name—to plead before Him the sufferings and death of His only-begotten Son, in gratitude for great mercies bestowed, in atonement for sins committed, in impetration of grace and favour, and in order to keep before God in heaven, and the Church on earth, the inscrutable love and infinite merits of the divine offering on the cross. One, therefore, sees at once how true it is that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the source of the Church's strength. Day by day, presenting before God the tremendous mysteries of the body and blood of Christ, she cannot but receive all she asks for—strength in the hour of weakness, patience in persecution, fortitude in dangers,

fidelity in her work, perseverance in her labour. The inward life of the Church is every day renewed and refreshed by the celebration of the Christian mysteries, in much the same way as a weary and thirsty traveller is re-invigorated by the waters of the cooling stream. The Israelites, in the wilderness, went out every morning to gather manna, and he that had much had nothing over, while he that had little had no lack, because there was enough fully and abundantly to satisfy all. The Sacrifice of the Mass is at once the vessel containing the heavenly manna, and the heavenly manna itself. It contains an inexhaustible supply of the bread from heaven containing in itself all sweetness; and, therefore, both as a sacrifice ever pleading before God, and as a communion of the body and blood of Christ, it constitutes the life and vigour of the Church. She rises from these mysteries as a giant refreshed with wine. Herein is the tree of life planted in the midst of the garden. Behold, therefore, in these sacred mysteries, the cause, the origin, the source, the well-spring, the *secret* of the strength and power of the Church.

II. And as the holy Sacrifice of the Mass is the secret strength of the Church in general, so it is the secret strength of each individual member of the

Church. There is one point of view in which our salvation seems to be a work of singular and almost insurmountable difficulty. For example: Place a young person in the midst of London, and consider the dangers that beset him on every side; what chance has he of saving his soul amid the pressing claims of business on the one hand, and the fearful temptations of life on the other? His danger is twofold. The competition of life is sufficient to make him put aside every other thought than the care of getting on in his business. Seeing how others think of nothing else, set no other object before them, and labour for no higher end, it is too probable that, left to himself, he will do the same. A certain earnestness in his work is necessary, and is right; a certain diligence he ought to employ; and yet the mere creature of the world imagines that earnestness and diligence can be employed to no other purpose than to achieve success and prosperity in business—thus stifling every thought of religion, putting the world in place of God, shutting out altogether the view of the supernatural, and compelling a man to live only for the present. This is one danger. The other comes from the coarse and common temptations to a loose and impure life. These temptations are patent; go where you will



you meet them. They obtrude themselves upon you with open shamelessness; they often hem you in, so that escape appears to be impossible. Where-withal, then, shall a young man cleanse his way—  
“*In quo corrigit adolescentior viam suam?*” How can he steer in safety between this double danger? How can he secure the salvation of his soul, and fulfil his allotted duty in the world? Here, again, the secret of his strength is the daily Sacrifice of the Mass. What is difficult and impossible without the grace of God, is easy and feasible with it. Remember that you are a Christian. Keep close to the cross, and then all will be right. Our strength comes from Calvary: the Sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, continued and represented in the Mass, will give us all we require. If you come before God under the shelter of this divine Sacrifice, and if you ask for the daily grace to remember Him amid the turmoil of life, and to keep close to Him amid the allurements to sin, at the same time pleading before His throne the infinite merits of our dear Saviour in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, you will receive all the armour and all the grace that is requisite for your dangerous position; you will enter upon your daily work strengthened and supported; you will be encompassed by an invincible shield of defence,

which will so guard you against the fiery darts of the evil one, that "thou shalt not be afraid of the terror of the night; of the arrow that flieth in the day, of the business that walketh about in the dark; of invasion, or of the noon-day devil."\* The daily sacrifice will apply to your soul the merits of Christ's precious death and passion, and will spread over you all this divine protection. The half-hour of the early morning passed in assisting at Mass, will have a marvellous effect upon the whole day; you will find yourself recollecting the presence of God more constantly in the midst of your work. Temptations will be blunted; you will not feel their assaults so acutely; you will have a greater facility in turning away from them. Let me, then, urge you to make a practice, if possible, of hearing Mass every day. You may, now and then, meet with a real impediment, but see that the obstacle is not of your own creation. Be satisfied that you have no strength and no security apart from the Sacrifice of the Mass. The closer that you keep to Calvary, the more sure you will be of victory; and the altar is the cross of Calvary, and the victim thereon is Jesus Christ—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: His body broken, and His blood shed for you. Accustom

\* Ps. xc. 5, 6.

yourselves to come daily to assist at these tremendous mysteries, and I will promise you not only the blessing of God and His grace, but constant increase of deep religious joy. You will not, indeed, escape temptation, because no soldier can expect the reward of glory unless he has actually engaged in battle; but you will have ever-increasing power to overcome all that the malice of Satan can contrive against you. You will be blest in your going out and in your coming in; the day will pass more happily because you have assisted at Mass; you will acquire a habit which it will be a pain to interrupt; and what habit can be in itself more holy or more worthy of the name by which you are called, than, day by day, to retrace your steps to the cross of Christ—to kiss the sacred tree whereon your Saviour was offered—to hide your sins and infirmities in His hands, feet, and side—and to go away sprinkled and purified, cleansed and hallowed, by the blood of Christ?

## LECTURE II.

---

### THE OFFICE OF VESPERS.

---

Ps. xcvi. 1.

“Cantate Dominum Canticum novum quia mirabilia fecit.”

IF I were asked to give a definition of Praise, I should say that it was the expression, in word or action, of the internal satisfaction, pleasure, and homage, which we feel and render to that which is noble, beautiful, and true. For example: A traveller who suddenly comes upon some grand and beautiful scenery cannot help breaking out into words of astonishment and satisfaction from the pleasure excited by that which he beholds. The beauty of nature extorts from him the homage of praise. So, also, if you chance to meet with some very rare and exquisite instrument, suited, in every minute respect, to the purpose for which it was made, your love of truth is satisfied by the fitness of the instrument to its end, and you praise the skill and ability of the artist. Once more: Let us hear of a man whose delight it is to be employed in

noble and useful deeds, who would brave any danger to succour the defenceless, or who would risk his own life in order to save another's, and we cannot help admiring and praising that man. Thus, there are three distinct qualities which almost inevitably evoke our praise—namely, beauty, truth, and nobleness of soul. Regarding ourselves merely in the natural order, we must be in some way deficient in rational apprehension, if we have no faculties to admire and to praise the noble, the beautiful, and the true. We must be deficient either in the physical qualities of the body, or in the moral qualities of the soul, or in both. Now, if a rightly-constituted mind lead us to admire what is true, and beautiful, and noble in the order of nature, much more will it lead us to do so in the order which is above nature. These qualities are in God, in their highest and most infinite perfection. In Him they have absolutely no limit; they admit of no comparison. One glimpse of the divine beauty of God is sufficient to ravish the soul, and to fix it in an everlasting ecstasy. It is impossible to behold God—most holy, most beautiful, and most true—without breaking forth into His praise. The angels, who are always in His presence, are for ever praising Him.\* They cast their crowns upon the ground, and cry out: "Holy, holy,

holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of thy glory." They are not free to act otherwise; they could not see God face to face, and act otherwise. That we men can know God in this life by faith, and yet be unwilling to praise Him, is a proof of our slavery, not of our liberty. It shows that we are still slaves to sin, and to the imperfections caused by sin; for it is an imperfection and a defect to know God by faith, and yet to be silent in His praise. Did we possess the perfect liberty of the holy angels, we could not remain mute and still while beholding, even through a glass darkly, the face of the Most High God.

And this brings me to the subject which I propose for our consideration at present. From what I have said, it is obvious that the praise of God is a distinct duty of religion. No doubt, that the best praise which we can offer to God is the sacrifice of a just and holy life; and, indeed, no language, however fervent, which is not in harmony with a holy life, can be in the least pleasing to Him. Still, it is a duty to express openly in words what we feel inwardly in the heart. We must praise God by our actions, by our alms, by our faith, and by our words. Every one who lives by faith realises, to a certain extent, the beauty and the majesty of God. We

see God by faith; and as the vision of God must captivate the heart and mind, we are bound to give utterance, in the language of praise, to the satisfaction and joy produced in us by this spiritual vision.

Now, the Church has provided for us a mode of praising God, which has the strongest claims upon our reverence and devotion. The Divine Office, as it is called, is a collection of psalms, prayers, and holy readings apportioned to the seven hours of prayer; for seven times a day does the Church take up and continue the praises of God. Anciently, it was customary for the faithful to join in the chanting of the Divine Office more regularly than is now the case; for the practical devotions of the Church change and vary according to the circumstances and needs of the people in each generation. At present, the Divine Office is said daily by the sacred ministers, by religious, both men and women, and by such confraternities as think fit to unite for this purpose. There are those, as in the olden time, who break the stillness of each successive night by the invitation to come and adore God. But the people at large are at liberty to join in the Divine Office or not, according as their piety and inclination may prompt them. Nevertheless, it is still customary

with the faithful to join in the Vesper Office of the principal feasts. The Church does not enjoin this devotion as a positive duty, in the same way as she enjoins the hearing of Mass; but still it is a custom which she does everything in her power to foster and to encourage. And for this reason I wish to dwell, particularly, upon the character and beauty of Vespers. There is something in the very name of Vespers which exercises a power over the mind. Men not easily impressed by religion have felt a peculiar attraction to this hour of prayer. To them the ringing of the vesper-bell is like the notes of a soft and gentle voice from heaven, inviting them to rest in peace after the turmoils of the day. The hour of Vespers is that ninth hour of prayer at which St. Peter and St. John went up to the temple, when St. Peter healed the man who had been lame from his mother's womb. It is the hour when, during the greater part of the year, the shades of evening are beginning to fall upon the earth. The sun has nearly run its course, and is now about to sink behind the hills. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." Now, again the Church calls upon us to rest a little from our toil, and to prepare against the approaching darkness, by praising the goodness and mercy of God in the incar-



nation of our Lord Jesus Christ; for this is the key to the full understanding of the Office of Vespers; this is the leading idea which, generally speaking, has suggested the choice of the Psalms. Hence, the Office begins with, "Dixit Dominus Domino meo." The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thy enemies thy footstool;—the words quoted by our Lord Himself in proof of His own Divinity. Hence she sings: "Redemptionem misit populo suo." He hath sent redemption to His people. "Potens in terra erit semen ejus." His seed shall be powerful on earth. "Gloria, et divitiæ in domo ejus." Glory and riches shall be in His house—in allusion to the rapid diffusion of the Catholic Church. Again—"A solis ortu usque ad occasum, laudabile nomen Domini." From the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the name of the Lord is worthy of praise. "Qui habitare facit sterilem in domo, matrem filiorum lætantem." Who maketh her that is barren to dwell in the house a joyful mother of children. These and many other passages celebrate the glory of the Incarnation, and illustrate the fruitfulness and catholicity of the Church. And hence it is, that the Office of Vespers is especially connected with the commemoration of the Most Blessed Virgin. The Church has taken up her own song of praise,

and has continued it from the beginning, and will continue it until the end. Like our Most Blessed Lady herself, the holy Church has been raised from lowliness to greatness; she magnifies and praises her Divine Lord: "*Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ,*" because He hath looked upon the lowliness of His handmaid; "*Quia fecit mihi magna, qui potens est,*" because He that is mighty hath done for her great things; and because by His grace, and by the plentiful food of His sacraments, He hath filled the hungry with good things, while the rich—those who neither value His grace nor seek it—He hath sent empty away. "*Esurientes implevit bonis,*" and "*divites dimisit inanes.*" In this way the Church appropriates to herself sacred language, which applies in its fulness to the mystery of the Incarnation, and to the singular prerogative of the Blessed Virgin. Unable of herself to praise God as He ought to be praised, she employs the words of Mary our mother. By doing so, she commemorates the exaltation of Mary. She fulfils the prophecy contained in the Magnificat itself: that all generations shall call the holy Mother of God ever blessed. She keeps fresh in her memory the maternity of Mary, and the incarnation of her Son; while, under the shelter of language most dear to God, she offers her own meed of

praise and gratitude for all the mercies that the human race have received through the birth and passion of Jesus Christ. I know no stronger reason than this for frequenting and for joining in the Vesper Office of the Church. Every one who repeats the Magnificat unites his judgment, heart, and affections with the heart and devotion of the Most Blessed Virgin ; and under the tutelage of her immaculate purity he offers to God his own humble tribute of praise, as the day declines and the shadows of the night are drawing on. In all things relating to the life of faith, we are like children. Children are afraid of the dark ; they do not like to be left alone in it. They ask their mothers to stay in the room with them, and they go to sleep the more easily if they are soothed and lulled by the gentle song of her who has given them birth. In the same way the evening of the day reminds us of the evening of life, and the night which is drawing on is a type of that black night which, sooner or later, must come upon each one of us, enveloping us in its cold embrace. As children, we fondly cling to Mary our mother. We ask her to take us by the hand ; we wish to prepare for rest under her care and protection ; and hence we join with devotion in the Vesper Office of the Church, because the song which calms,

and soothes, and tranquillises our souls, is the song of the Blessed Virgin our mother. Nor is this all; the language in which the Divine Office of the Church speaks the praise of God, has been from the earliest ages the devotional language of all faithful souls, both in the Christian Church, and in the dispensations that went before it. When our Blessed Lord was dying on the cross, He used the ancient words of the Psalmist to express His own deep sense of desolation—"Deus, Deus meus . . . quare me dereliquisti?" My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Even He could find no more expressive terms in which to give vent to the sorrows of His breaking heart, than the language which He Himself had dictated to the prophet of old. Whatever the spirit of devotion needeth is always found in the book of Psalms. If it be an act of contrition, or a prayer of protection, or a song of praise, or a hymn of triumph, we naturally seek for it in the Psalms of David; they are the common language of devotion. When the Church prays, she can scarcely do it save in the words of our Divine Lord, His Blessed Mother, and the Psalmist of Israel. The Psalms were the prayer-book of piety long before the rise of the Christian Church. Whoever was devout or holy among the people of Israel sought to express his devotion in

the words of the inspired songs of David, which although usually called the Psalms of David, because they were principally composed by him, yet contain hymns as old, at least, as the times of Moses; so that, at the present day, when we sing Vespers, or join in any other Office of the Church, we take up and continue the one unbroken language of devotion, which having begun in prophecy under the older dispensations is continued and realised in the Christian Church. As there is one Lord, one baptism, and one Church, so there is one language of devotion common to the piety of all ages and all times. This is that new song which the Psalmist calls upon us to join in: "Cantate Dominum Canticum novum quia mirabilia fecit." Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done wonderful things. This is that song which the ancient Israelites called "the Lord's song," and which they were unable to sing in a strange land. "Super flumina Babylonis," "By the waters of Babylon we sat down and wept: when they required of us a song, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" This is that new song which the four living creatures, and the four-and-twenty ancients sung before the Lamb, "having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odour, which are the prayers of the saints."\* And this is that new song

\* Rev. v. 8.

which St. John heard the harpers harping on their harps, and singing before the throne—"And no man could say the canticle," could relish it, understand it, take pleasure in repeating it, "but those hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth." It is a song at once new and old; new, because it is ever drawing forth, from the depth of its inspiration, new meanings and new applications—old, because when everything else in the world has passed away, or has been convulsed and changed, this one unbroken language of praise has been ascending to heaven from age to age, in a continuous and uninterrupted strain of divine harmony.

And yet, although we might suppose that the instincts of Christianity would prompt every one to take up and continue on this heavenly song upon earth, this is unhappily not the case. Some will tell you that the Vesper Office of the Church is dull and tedious, and that they can take no interest in repeating it. Others will say that they do not understand it, and for this reason they cannot be expected to assist at it.

But let us see what these objections are worth. Any devotion will be dull at which you may assist with your heart and mind elsewhere. And if you come to church, as many of these objectors do, with-

out your prayer-book, and remain cold and listless, you cannot expect to find satisfaction and devotion. But, then, with whom lies the fault? with the ancient Offices of the Church, with the divine song, which no mere worldly and irreverent man can learn? or with yourself, who, in the service and worship of God, take less interest and less pains than you would in a matter of amusement? If you attended a concert of secular music, you would, without doubt, try to secure a copy of the words, that you might be able to know what was sung. You come to join in the praises of God, and you neither know the words of the divine song, nor take the pains to learn them. No wonder, therefore, that the Vespers appear to you dull and insipid; but the reason is, because your own soul is sluggish, and because it is deaf to the divine harmony. I must, however, acknowledge that some excuse for this dislike of the Vesper Office is to be found in the kind of singing which you often hear in our churches. If the music be of a very exaggerated and unpopular nature, we cannot be surprised if the people are unable to join in the Vespers, and if they, consequently, acquire a distaste for them. It never was the intention of the Church that the singing of God's praises should be confined to a few people in an organ-loft. The Church

evidently intends and wishes it to be otherwise. The music to which the psalms are usually chanted is, in its character, especially intended for general and congregational use. In these days, when music is so easily learnt, and when large numbers can be so quickly taught to sing together, there is really no excuse for this unseemly reticence of God's praises. Wherever the people are encouraged to join in singing the divine praises, there you will find a special heartiness and earnestness in the worship of God; you will find, also, a deep appreciation of the beauty of the Divine Offices, which you will fail to see elsewhere. Bring the people out of their coldness, their shyness, and their formality in the service of God, and you will not need arguments to encourage them to join in the Offices of religion. It will be a pleasure, not a mere duty. It will be a labour of love.

But as to the second objection, I am almost ashamed to notice it. You say that you do not understand the Latin, and that, therefore, you cannot join with interest in chanting the Latin psalms. But here, again, where does the fault lie? We live in days when there is every facility for adding to our knowledge, and when what was once said of the Athenians may be truly predicated of ourselves, that we are always employed in either telling or hearing



some new thing.\* It is, therefore, very little to any one's credit that he should come continually to church and make no effort to understand the Latin. I may here remind you of the reason why the Offices of the Church and the Mass are always said in the Latin tongue. The Catholic Church is universal. It does not belong to any particular people or nation. It is for all people, and for all nations. And, therefore, its language must be universal, and not national. It would seriously interrupt the practical unity of the Church, as well as the devotion of its members, if the public Offices of religion were in different languages in different countries. Inconveniences, greater than I can now stop to mention, would be the result; consequently, the Church has adopted one universal language, which is more easily learned, and more generally understood throughout the world, than any other; and it argues a wilful negligence in any man of ordinary education to be ignorant of the Latin language, so far as it is necessary to follow and to take an interest in the public Offices of religion.†

\* Acts, xvii. 21.

† The provincial liturgies of the Oriental Church, sanctioned by the Holy See, form, indeed, an exception to this rule, but an exception which confirms and establishes it; for although the Church has sanctioned these local rites out of respect to the ancient customs

Away, therefore, dear brethren, with these idle excuses, and prepare to throw yourselves more heartily into the spirit of your holy religion. "Cantate Dominum Canticum novum quia mirabilia fecit." Sing unto the Lord a new song, for He hath done wonderful things. The most wonderful of all has been your own elevation to the supernatural state, and the innumerable graces which He hath from time to time poured down upon you: for these things you ought to thank and praise Him; praise Him for all the benefits He hath granted you; praise Him, above all, for His own perfections. Behold Him with the eye of faith; see Him in His majesty, His greatness, and His truth. "Sursum corda." Lift up your hearts in love and gratitude to God, and join in that unbroken song of praise which night and day ascends to heaven from the Church on earth, to make expiation for the blasphemies of the wicked, and to remind the Almighty, that, in the midst of human sin and ingratitude, we, His faithful children, are not forgetful of His everlasting mercy and truth.

and traditions of the East, yet the nationality which they have helped to keep alive has in many ways injured Catholic communion, and has been one of the causes which led to the schism of the East.

### LECTURE III.

---

## BLESSING AND BENEDICTION.

---

ST. LUKE, xxiv. 50, 51.

“And He led them out as far as Bethania, and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven.”

Few things are more dreaded than a curse; so much so, that it was one time the custom with many civilized nations to avoid any direct enunciation of the word by which a curse was meant. Almost all the people of the East, as well as the Romans themselves, employed some term of more happy omen, when they had occasion to allude to malediction and cursing. In the ancient Greek mythology, the supposed ministers of the divine fury were called by a name which signified kindness and compassion, the very opposite of their presumed office of vengeance; and the ignorant people worshipped these supposed deities with servile fear. Yet they never ventured to men-

tion their names, nor even to look at their temples, when they passed them by, so fearful were they of the curse and vengeance of their idols. In the book of Job we have a remarkable instance of a reluctance to express a word implying cursing. Job's wife wished her husband to put an end to his trials by cursing God, but she does not use the word "curse." "And his wife said to him: Dost thou still continue in thy simplicity? *bless* God and die."\* By blessing she meant cursing. Now, there are certainly strong reasons for this general fear of malediction, for the divine denunciations are never uttered in vain; their effects invariably follow, unless the curse itself be removed. Of this we have several remarkable instances in the sacred Scriptures. At the fall of man, "the Lord said to the serpent: Because thou hast done this thing, thou art cursed among all cattle and beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." "And to Adam He said: Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread until thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust thou

\* Job, ii. 9.

shalt return.”\* We have only to look around at the miseries of the human race, in order to see the effects of this curse in the hard labour of the poor, and the sore bondage of the oppressed. Again, the Almighty cursed the first who shed human blood, and he was ever afterwards a fugitive and a vagabond on the face of the earth, which refused to render him its fruits when he tilled it; for God had said: “When thou shalt till it, it shall not yield to thee its fruit. A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth.”† When Cham had acted with shameless irreverence towards Noe, his father, the patriarch, awaking from the wine, having learned what his younger son had done to him, said: “Cursed be Chanaan, a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.”‡ He spoke this by divine inspiration, so that his malediction was the malediction of God; and in the degradation of the African race we see to this day the continued fulfilment of this divine judgment. Once more, in the New Testament we read that when our Lord was about to enter Jerusalem, along the way He came to a fig-tree having leaves, “if perhaps He might find anything on it. And when He was come to it, He found nothing but leaves; for it was not the time for figs. And answering, He said to it: May no man

\* Gen. iii. 14, 17-19.

† Gen. iv. 12.

‡ Gen. ix. 25.

hereafter eat fruit of thee any more for ever." The curse took effect immediately. "And when the evening was come, He went forth out of the city. And when they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots. And Peter, remembering, said to Him: Rabbi, behold the fig-tree, which thou hast cursed, hath withered away."\*

From these instances of divine judgment and malediction two inferences very plainly follow:—1. Men have good reason to be afraid of the curse of God. 2. The effects of this curse are easily seen. They are degradation, misery, misfortune, a withering away of whatever is vigorous in man—in a word, punishment of some kind, either in this world or in the next. If such be the effects of a curse, what are the consequences of a blessing? My object is to dwell upon the mercy, the love, and the tenderness of God, not upon His severity and His judgments. But the best way of enabling you to see that the divine blessing must always have some salutary effect, is to remind you of the consequences attendant upon the divine judgments. These latter are generally more patent than the former. And yet, if the curse of God is always followed by some penal results, it is only natural to infer that the benediction of God will likewise be

\* St. Mark, xi, 13, &c.

always followed by effects of a contrary nature. God is not unjust. He rejoices in blessing rather than in cursing. His judgments are sent upon men, if one may so say, unwillingly, while, through the abundance of His mercies, "He maketh the sun to rise upon the good and bad, and raineth upon the just and unjust." The present order of divine providence is an order of benediction. God is on all sides pouring down His blessings upon us. He blest our first parents, and commanded them to "increase and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it." He blest Abraham in reward for his faith, and promised that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blest. He blest the house of Putiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guard, so long as Joseph was in it. And the "Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and multiplied all his substance, both at home and in the fields." He blest Obadedom and all his house during the three months within which the Ark rested there. Our blessed Saviour commenced His divine ministry by giving from the mountain His blessing to various classes of those who were to be His people. And the last act of His ministry on earth was to leave to His Apostles and the faithful His tenderest benediction. "And He led them out as far as Bethania, and lifting up His hands He blessed them And it came to

pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven." This parting blessing of Christ has been taken up and continued by the Catholic Church, to whom He has left power to bless in His name. Like God Himself, the Church is everywhere scattering her benedictions. She blesses the sacred elements used in the administration of the sacraments. She blesses the food which we eat. She blesses the lustral water with which we are taught to sprinkle ourselves on entering our churches. She blesses the union of husband and wife in the sacrament of marriage. She has her benediction for women in the time of their travail and after child-birth. She blesses the fruits of the earth and the vines. She blesses the houses in which we live. She blesses the new ship that is about to be launched upon the sea, with all who may sail therein. There is nothing either too great to be above, nor too minute to be below, the benediction of the Church. The candles that are to give us light, the paschal lamb, the Easter eggs, the pilgrims on their way to, and on their return from, the Holy Places, the tabernacle wherein the blessed Sacrament is to be preserved, the vestments used in the Sacrifice of the Mass, the images of our Lord and of the saints; lastly, the final resting-place of the dead, the earth which is placed around their coffins,



each and all receive the blessing of the Church, which is in truth the blessing of Jesus Christ Himself.

But now in what does this blessing consist? What are its effects? We know the consequences of a malediction; we do not see so clearly, nor all at once, the results of a benediction. It does not always keep trials, nor sicknesses, nor afflictions away from us; on the contrary, those are sometimes the most blest who are called by God to suffer the most. What, then, is the real use and benefit of a blessing? Every one will admit that some good and gracious consequences must be the result of a divine blessing. But what are they?

In order to give an answer to this inquiry, it is necessary to remind you that the objects capable of being blest, are either the inanimate creation (such as the fruits of the earth), the works of human skill, the lower animals, or man himself. Each of these four classes is, from time to time, the subject of divine blessing. In the beginning, Almighty God blest the lower animals, giving them commandment to increase and multiply, and replenish the earth; and to this day the Church often gives them her blessing, as yearly, at Rome, on the feast of St. Antony. And mankind is capable of a twofold benediction—(1) affecting his temporal and physical being; (2) affecting his higher

spiritual and supernatural qualities. Now the first effect of a blessing is to translate the object blest from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. Satan is called in Scripture "the prince of this world,"\*

\* It is necessary to bear in mind the sense in which the Scriptures and the Holy Fathers allow Satan to be the prince of this world. It is not as if the laws of nature were in any sense subordinate to his power, or as if he could alter or suspend them. Satan is not the prince of this world by creation, but by usurpation, by tyranny, by intrusion. His is an unlawful dominion, which ought to be cast forth *vi et armis*. At the fall of man he became the tyrant of the human race, exercising over wicked and unregenerate man the most insidious and deadly influences, and striving to keep men his subjects by means of the wealth and vices of the world. Speaking strictly, Satan lied when he said to our Lord that all the kingdoms of the world belonged to him; because, by creation, they belong to God alone, and, as S. Chrysostom observes, many holy men were made kings by God. He, therefore, spoke vaingloriously and falsely, or rather in a subtle, quibbling manner, as he spoke to our first parents. For, being a usurper, he has an actual power in and over the kingdoms of the world, although it be a power altogether unlawful and impious. And hence our Saviour's silence is an admission of his *de facto* power or influence. It is in this sense also that Satan is called the prince of the power of the air, because he preserves a permissive power over evil men, as well as over the winds and elements for the injury of the earth. (See Cor. a Lapide, in Eph. ii. 2.)

The following passages from S. Augustine, illustrate the sense in which any power over men or things is attributed to Satan :

"Far be it from us to suppose that the devil is called the prince of this world in such a sense as if he was lord of heaven and earth. But by the world we mean wicked men, as by a house we sometimes mean those who inhabit it. We say, for example, it is a good house, or it is a bad house, not in praise or blame of the mere

"the prince of the powers of the air," "the god of this world." To him, as we learn from the history of our Lord's temptation, in a certain sense, belong the kingdoms of the world. In presence of Christ, he claimed them to be his, and, without contradiction from our Lord, he asserted that he could give them to whomsoever he pleased. This is the misery of this fallen world of ours, that unregenerated man, with all that was created on account of man, with the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, belong, by a sort of possession, to Satan. It is the only explanation of the wretchedness, the degradation, and the profound

building, but of the morals of its inhabitants. In this sense, therefore it is said that the devil is the prince of this world, *i.e.*, the prince of all the wicked men who dwell in the world." (In Joh. 1, cap. 12, Tract 52).

"Wherefore all men from their origin are under the prince of the power of the air, who worketh in the children of disobedience. And what I said, from their origin, this is what the Apostle says, 'that by nature they also were even as the rest;' by nature, to wit, as it hath been depraved by sin, not as it was created upright by God." "But the mode in which man has been delivered to the power of the devil ought not to be so understood as if God had done this, or had ordered it to be done, but that he only permitted it, although justly. For when he deserted the sinner, the author of sin immediately seized upon him. . . . If, therefore, the commission of 'sin, through the just anger of God, has rendered man subject to the devil, most certainly the remission of sin, through the merciful reconciliation of God, rescues man from the devil." (De Trinitate, lib. 13, ss. 16.)

ignorance of a vast mass of the human race, that which is so often called by St. Augustine, "*Massa perditionis*."

I. Now the first effect of the blessing of God and of His Church, is to take man and the material creation, animate and inanimate, out of this kingdom of Satan, and place them, by consecration, in the kingdom of God. There is an old creation and a new creation. The one belongs, as a consequence of sin, and in a restricted sense, to Satan; the other to God. In Jesus Christ, all things become "a new creature." They are blest, and they cease from that moment to belong to Satan. They become a part of this new creation. They are consecrated and hallowed to God, and then they cease to be in any sense under the influence and power of the evil one. Considered in themselves, all the creatures of God are good; but they acquire a certain aspect of evil from the usurpations of Satan, in much the same way as anyone would acquire an evil reputation, who was a well-known frequenter of evil places, or a constant companion of evil persons. From the possessor a certain character attaches itself to the thing which he possesses. Whatever belongs to Satan is under the influence of a withering pestilential breath. When the Church, by her blessing, removes it out of Satan's power, it escapes from the

evil atmosphere which surrounded it; it shines forth in all that natural goodness which was declared to belong to it at the beginning, and it, moreover, acquires a certain holiness from the very atmosphere of holiness in which it is placed by its consecration to God. And this is, I apprehend, the meaning of St. Paul's words in the second Epistle to St. Timothy: 'For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving; *for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.*' That is, all things are by creation good; but whatever accidental uncleanness or evil they may have in any sense acquired, by the degradation of nature or the assaults of the devil, are removed, for they are "sanctified by the word of God and prayer;" in other words, by blessing.\*

II. Again, we feel how completely we are in the hands of God—without Him we can do nothing. In Him we live, and move, and have our being. Almighty God not only called us, and all this varied world, into

\* Est concessio, q. d. dixi Jam cibum quemvis non esse immundum, ac proinde eo vesci licere: sed esto: sit aliquâ ratione, puta quia lege veteri vetitus, aut quia diabolo immolatus, vel ab illo afflatus aut vitiatum est, sit, inquam, hac aliave ratione immundus: sanctificatur tamen, id est, mundatur et purificatur per verbum Dei et orationem, id est per benedictionem quæ fit per verbum Dei et orationem. (Cor. & Lapide, in 1 Tim. iv. 5.)

being by creation, but He keeps us in life and being by what philosophers call His "concurrence," or His conservation.

Apart from supernatural grace, there is a continual influence of divine power pervading all creation, by which that which was once called into being is preserved, and is enabled to discharge its vital functions. Now this divine influence may either be that which is common to all, or it may be something additional and peculiar. When God blest the house of the captain of Pharaoh's guard, so long as Joseph was there, something new and peculiar was added to that act of concurrence and assistance, which, under all circumstances, He vouchsafes His creatures. So also it was in the case of Abraham, who, although old and well-stricken in years, became, after the divine blessing, the father of Isaac, and, through him, of a great nation. The blessing which he received had in view no direct supernatural object. It did not go beyond the strict limits of nature. But where it found nature weak and feeble, and ready to fail, it bestowed upon it life and power, and, as it were, a new freshness of youth. And this is another effect of divine benediction, namely, without passing the order of nature, to give to the natural powers, faculties, and actions of God's creatures, a degree of conservation, an energy,

a vitality, a capability, which they could not otherwise enjoy.

III. But once more, the visible and invisible are joined together by a mysterious bond of union. Good angels and evil angels are on all sides of us: the one helping us into heaven, the other endeavouring to bring us down to hell. If all that is good in the unseen creation guards and influences us for our benefit, all that is evil is ever striving to do us harm. Satan and his companions seek our destruction unceasingly. They watch for occasions to tempt us, when they think that we are most likely to yield and fall. They try to do us injury in our bodies and in our souls. If they could be said to have any happiness, it would consist in defeating the mercy of God, and in spoiling His work. Night and day they are vigilant to do evil. As we do not see them, they come upon us unawares, when we least expect them. It is difficult to fight with unseen foes, and yet this is a main part of our spiritual warfare. For, says the Apostle, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places."\* And it is with this warfare that the divine blessing has to do. It

\* Eph. v. 12.

acts both as a shield and as a sword. It confers many actual graces, whereby the enemies of our souls are vanquished and put to flight. It serves as a protection against their assaults. Fortified with the blessing of God, we may walk fearlessly through dangers that should otherwise overwhelm us. The divine benediction is a shield, guarding us from all the fiery darts of the wicked one. It places upon us the sign and mark of Christ. And Satan is unable to do us any effectual wrong, so long as we remain under the power and guardianship of that sacred sign. So that the third and greatest effect of the divine blessing is to give us such actual graces as we may need, and to form a bulwark and fortress around us, which shall be impenetrable to the assaults or the snares of our spiritual foes. True, indeed, it is, that we can break away from the influence of the blessing of God, just as we can trample under foot the graces and inspirations of His Holy Spirit. Not even will the divine blessing act against our own will and correspondence. In all things we must work together with God. But if we do not despise it, nor reject it, the blessing of God and of His Church will affect us in one or all of three ways—(1) it will transfer us from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light; (2) it will confer on our deeds and actions a spiritual assistance and a fructifying energy;



(3) and it will help us actually with grace, and protect us powerfully against the malignity of the devil. These effects are real. They bring health to the body and life to the soul. They drive away from us that which is evil. They cause to flow down upon us the rivers of the grace of God. So that, if malediction and cursing bring in its train a withering blight and a hopeless misery, benediction is followed by life and strength, peace and joy.

And if this be so of blessing in general, it is true, in the highest degree, of the benediction of our Lord in the most holy Sacrament. Jesus came to bless. He came to remove the curse. In the first days of His infancy He blessed the shepherds who adored Him in the stable; He blessed the wise men who brought Him gifts of gold, incense, and myrrh; He blessed the little children, whom He took into His arms and kissed. His parting gift to His Apostles, and, through them, to the whole Church, was the gift of His peace and blessing. When the world beheld Him for the last time until the day of judgment, it saw Him in the act of blessing. "He lifted up His hands and blessed them. And whilst He blessed them, He was parted from them." And now, in the benediction of the blessed Sacrament, He renews and continues His blessing. Here it is not the Church which gives us a blessing

(although her blessings are really Christ's), but it is Jesus Christ, in His own divine person. He Himself speaks to us, as He spoke to His Apostles, and says: "Peace be with you. My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither be ye afraid." There is something inexpressibly sweet and soothing in the simple function of benediction. We come into the presence of Jesus Christ in the blessed Sacrament; we sing hymns and litanies in honour of the most marvellous miracle of divine love; we offer supreme adoration to the Son of God, and a tribute of most gracious love to His most holy Mother, and we receive, in return, a blessing from Jesus Christ Himself. He soothes, comforts, and reanimates us. Our trials become more easy to be borne after we have been to benediction; our spirits, ruffled by the crosses of the day, are calmed and consoled; our energies, enfeebled by languor or sin, receive a fresh force and power. After benediction we appear to be better fitted for our work, whatever it may be, and it seems the more to prosper and succeed. Therefore, dear brethren in Christ, and especially you who are in the morning of life, never allow an opportunity to pass by without sharing in this most tender act of worship. You have your various plans for the future of your days; you

have your peculiar dangers and temptations; you know your own weakness, and against what you have most to guard. Nothing that you do can prosper unless God gives you His blessing. You can neither resist sin, nor grow in grace, unless He grants you the increase. Therefore seek His blessing, which is in itself more precious than gold.

In the adoration of the blessed Sacrament, open to Him all your heart; speak to Him as a man speaketh to his friend; reveal to Him your wishes, fears, and longings. There is a language more true and more expressive than the language of words. It is when heart communes with heart in the deep emotion of silent ecstasy. This is the language of the soul in converse with Jesus at the moment of benediction. Listen to all that Jesus may say to you while He is imparting His blessing. It is then that He causes His peace and joy to permeate all through your being. In that most solemn moment He will, in His own way, communicate to you many things relating to your salvation. Some have been converted by being present at benediction; others have been drawn on to a closer and higher communion with God; others, again, have gone away so deeply moved by the tenderness and sweetness of Jesus Christ, at this moment of blessing, that they have been disgusted with the life of sin

which they had hitherto been leading, and have been unable to rest until they were reconciled to God in the sacrament of penance. The time of benediction is a time of very special grace. Bow, therefore, your heads with the faithful people of God, and profoundly adore Jesus Christ, stretching forth His hands to bless you. All in the church is still and quiet. The hymn in praise of the blessed Sacrament is over. The organ is silent. The people are on their knees. The cloud of incense is ascending upwards. Not a sound is to be heard throughout the vast congregation. The benediction of the most holy Sacrament is given amid profound silence. But in that moment of silence, Jesus Himself infuses into the interior of His true and faithful children energy for their work, fortitude for their trials, and fresh food for their devotion.

## LECTURE IV.

---

### DEVOTION TO THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

---

PROVERBS, viii. 22, 23.

“The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made.”

SOME duties dawn upon us by a kind of instinct prior to all reasoning about them. A child does not wait until he can be taught in a formal manner the duty of loving the mother who gave him birth, and then, when his reason and judgment have been fully satisfied, begin to put that love into practice. On the contrary, his little heart beats with love for her from the first moment of its existence. She is the being to whom he naturally clings for support and protection. He cries when he is absent from her. He is pleased when she takes him in her arms. He knows her to be his mother by a knowledge more instinctive and true, than any that can be acquired by reason. As he grows up, he learns by positive precept that which he already knows by an impulse of nature. He

sees motives in reason and in faith for cherishing and practising that love which nature had first enkindled in his heart. He discovers, also, different modes and ways of exhibiting that deep and pure affection. But it was neither reason nor faith which first implanted the affection itself within him, for it is an instinct of his nature. In like manner, love to the most Blessed Virgin is an instinct of our supernatural being. It comes to us with the gift of faith in the sacrament of baptism. It is one of the gifts inherent in a regenerated nature. It is as true and necessary a gift of grace, as faith, or hope, or the love of God. Indeed, it is impossible to form a true conception of Christianity without including within it the idea of a dutiful allegiance and practical devotion to the most Blessed Virgin. And there are two reasons why there can be no genuine Christianity without love to the Blessed Virgin. They are reasons that lie at the very root of our holy religion, and they will well repay a careful consideration.

I. Every religion reflects the teaching and spirit of its founder. Christianity is the religion of Jesus Christ, and, consequently, is the embodiment of the divine teaching, affections, and life of our Blessed Saviour. In one important respect, Christianity differs from all false religions. These latter are either corrupt

superstitions, or cold philosophies. Those who are votaries of a false religion are only so far connected with its founder, as they happen to coincide with him in opinion. The disciples of Plato or Aristotle had no other bond of union with their great masters, than their agreement with the systems propounded by those philosophers. It is otherwise with the one true faith. The union between Christ and His followers is real and personal. Christ and they become one mystical person. The sacraments are the instruments by which this union is effected. By baptism we are made members of Christ. We are incorporated with Him. We become one body with Him. We are the members; He is the head. We are the body; He is the soul. It is He who gives us life and being. Let Him be taken away, and we die at once. The other sacraments sustain this union and this source of life. But, above all, the sacrament of the Eucharist, by feeding us with the very body and blood of Christ, makes us one with Him, in a manner than which nothing can be conceived more close and intimate. This being the case, we do not merely assent to the truths and doctrines taught by our Divine Master, in the same way as Plato may have assented to the teaching of Socrates; we come to have with Him one heart and one mind.

“Let this mind be in you,” said the Apostle, “which was also in Christ Jesus.” “We being many, are one body in Jesus Christ, and every one members one of another.” And again: “Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.” This clothing of the regenerated man with Jesus Christ, this incorporation with His body, this engrafting into Him, the true vine, is the very essence of Christianity. The Church is the company of the faithful, and it is the Body of Christ. And, as there is one faith and one baptism, so there is one mystical body, which, not merely represents Christ on earth, but which is Christ, being quickened by His Spirit, animated by His divine personality, and enabled to continue His life in the world. We being many, in Him become one body. Hence we do not truly belong to Him, unless we have, at least, in germ and beginning, the same heart and mind as He has. Our desires must be the same as His, our affections, our love must be one with His own, otherwise, we have not one heart and one mind.

Now, the most Blessed Virgin was the one being on earth whom our Divine Saviour loved above all others. It was Mary who gave Him birth. Her arms were the first to receive and to embrace Him. In her tender bosom He took His sweet and tranquil rest. To her He revealed the deep things of God plainly, not speak-



ing in parables, as to the rest. While He dwelt in Nazareth, subject to Mary and Joseph, He spoke and disclosed to her the mystery of His future sufferings, as well as the rise and progress, the persecutions and the glories of His Church. From her He hid nothing. The hearts of Jesus and Mary were joined together in an ineffable union; and, therefore, no love could be greater than the love of Jesus for Mary His mother. Hence it is incredible to suppose that our Lord could have founded the Christian religion, without assigning a fitting place in it for devotion to the mother whose heart was so closely joined with His own. The religion He founded reflected His own truth and affection; and, therefore, it reflected His own reverence, gratitude, and love to His dear mother. We, as members of His body, are quickened and vivified by His own Body, soul, and mind. We have no other source of life and love. And, consequently, as His own heart has never ceased to throb with the most intense filial tenderness for His mother, some portion of the same tenderness and affection must pass on into our hearts, united by the grace of regeneration, as one heart, with the heart of Jesus.

In virtue, therefore, of our incorporation with the mystical body of Christ, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin is found to lie at the very root of Christianity;

in such a degree, as that no one has a right to be called a Christian, in the true sense of the term, who is devoid of that devotion, at least in germ and in principle. It is one of the criteria of Christianity. It has its allotted place in the analogy of the faith. One can no more imagine a genuine Christianity without devotion to the Blessed Virgin, than you can imagine a genuine Christianity without belief in the incarnation and satisfaction of Christ. They are both parts of the same system, and must stand or fall together.

II. And this will appear still more clearly if we look at the question from another point of view. The Church has accommodated to the Blessed Virgin the words of Solomon: "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning." Our Blessed Lady was in the mind of the Almighty from the beginning. In His divine predestination, He united Mary with Jesus in the reconciliation and redemption of mankind. "Before He made anything," before he commenced His merciful work of restoration, He possessed Mary in His divine mind as the pure, immaculate Virgin who was to be the shrine, the tabernacle, the ark of the Son of God. She was the hinge on which the destiny of man depended. She was the beginning of life and health to our fallen race. She was the bright and

morning star who was to usher in the Sun of Justice, and to dispel the darkness that overhung the world, In the very act of laying the foundation of Christianity, the worship of Mary preceded the birth of Jesus. Her consent was sought and required to the Incarnation of our Blessed Saviour. The first who said the Hail Mary was one of the highest archangels in the court of heaven, who, with profound reverence and deep adoration, commenced that Ave Maria, which the Church has since taken up, and which she has echoed and re-echoed throughout her borders from her first beginning until now. The moment in which the salutation of Mary was uttered, was the moment of the Incarnation. It was in the instant at which the Word was made man. Now the Incarnation is the foundation of Christianity, and you see that correlative with it is homage and adoration to the most Blessed Mary. The mystery of the Word made flesh, and the exaltation and prerogatives of His blessed mother, are thus linked together: and what God has joined, no man is able to put asunder.

III. Nor has it ever been put asunder in the practice of the Church. We are not to judge of any religious system merely by its abstract doctrines. Its theory must be modified and explained by its practice. Of this, I think, we may be quite sure, that whether a

religion be true or false, its external life will be the reflection of its real spirit. Whatever be the character of its dogma, or the nature of its doctrines, the practice of the communion will be their true interpreter. You are not to look merely to written documents, or to formal decrees for the genuine spirit of any religious sect or body; you must look to its outward life and manifestation; you must look to its recognised practice and customs. These attempt and explain the structure of the letter; these give you the clue to the true understanding of its formularies, and to the true appreciation of its spirit. And this rule applies to the Church fully as much as to any false religion. The decrees and dogmas of the Church are intended to be carried out in practice, and this practice at once confirms, illustrates, and moderates them.

Bearing, then, this rule in view, the practice of the Church in all ages confirms the essential nature of the relation of the Blessed Virgin to Christianity. There can, indeed, be no question as to the reverence paid to the most holy Mother of God within the Catholic communion. The Church has never flagged in her devotion to Mary. It has grown with her growth, and increased with her strength. She has multiplied the feasts set apart to do her honour. Her piety has discovered new ways of promoting her glory on earth.

Her language has been exhausted in the use of words whereby the dignity, the prerogatives, and the glory of Mary may be adequately expressed. Her spiritual discernment has not failed to perceive, as if in the clear light of the divine vision, the marvellous accumulation of grace in the nature and person of the Mother of God. In this supercilious and sceptical age, the Church has attained the most clear perception of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin, and, despite the infidelity and coldness around her, she has not hesitated openly and loudly to declare it. No one, therefore, is likely to call in question the remarkable development of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin within the Catholic communion. That it always makes increase and progress in the Church is a fact, of which the definition of the Immaculate Conception is the latest evidence; and yet, with this single exception, it would be difficult to say how the nineteenth century differs from the thirteenth in its love and devotion to Mary. The Church is the true home of this devotion. Here it spreads and expands without having its growth in any way forced. In the faith of the Church its root has been planted from the beginning, and from her charity the tree and its branches receive both moisture and nourishment. But we often judge of the strength and vigour of a tree by the degree of vitality that remains

in its branches after they have been lopped off. And so we may judge of the depth and extent of that devotion to the Blessed Virgin which animated the Church in the most ancient times, from the honour in which our Blessed Lady is still held, and from the homage that is still paid to her in those schismatic communions of the East, which, for many centuries, have been cut off from Catholic unity. Those communions separated from the Church from various motives. But they carried with them into their schism all of the Catholic faith, except the particular doctrines which were the immediate subject of their heresy, and they have kept them in a state of stagnation, as it were, until this day. They, therefore, carried with them the reverence and devotion to the Blessed Virgin which prevailed in the Church before they left it. And this devotion they have continued up to the present time. In the midst of their melancholy separation from the one ark of salvation, they preserve the memory of her who was once their mother. The name of Mary is dear to them. The image of Mary is in their churches and in their houses. During the Crimean war, almost all the poor Russian soldiers who were found dead on the field of battle, carried medals and memorials of the Mother of God. So powerfully had the ancient Church inculcated devotion to the

Blessed Virgin, that, even in those stagnant and separated communions, it has survived the loss of faith and unity.

IV. And if any other proof were necessary, in order to establish the inherent connexion between devotion to Mary and true Christianity, it is to be found in the heresies of the few sects that have invented a Christianity wherein homage to the Mother of God finds no place. The Protestants began by pretending that the honour paid to the holy Virgin took away from the honour due to her divine Son. They have now come to give honour to neither. The popular Protestantism of the day neither believes in the divinity of Christ nor cares to conceal its unbelief. It denies His incarnation. It repudiates His atonement. It recedes, step by step, from every distinctive feature of the old Christian faith, and it sinks slowly, but surely, from a supernatural to a mere religion of nature. So true is it that Christianity is a whole. It must be held in its integrity, or it will crumble away. You cannot pick and choose what doctrines in Revelation you will receive, and what reject. To be a Christian you must be a Catholic in the unity of the Church. You must honour Jesus, and you must honour Mary; but if you refuse to render to each the honour that is their due, you will end by denying both.

And thus it is that violated faith avenges itself on unbelief.

Nothing, therefore, can be more clear than that devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an integral and essential portion of Christianity. Whatever calls itself by the sacred name of Christianity, and yet refuses to give reverence and worship to the most holy Mother of God, is in reality an apostacy. It has, in no true sense, the Spirit of Christ, and it is not the religion founded by Him. It will be narrow, harsh, stern, and gloomy. It will want the tenderness and the cheerfulness of the Catholic faith. In a word, it will be either no religion at all, or the religion of "Puritanism," like the ancient Pharisaism, making a great show of outward observance, while it is totally devoid of all the higher and nobler supernatural affections of the soul. Such as in ordinary life we sometimes meet with men who seem never to have experienced the love and care of a mother. They are generally austere, exacting, and stern in their manners and habits of thoughts, and, because without natural affection, repulsive and unattractive to others. For, in the training of the soul, the devotion to the Blessed Virgin occupies a place analogous, in the supernatural order, to the love of a mother in the order of nature, and it has corresponding supernatural effects. It gives a



gentleness, a tenderness, a repose, and a confidence to the spiritual affections of the soul, the absence of which must necessarily produce a harsh, austere, and repulsive temperament.

You see then, dear brethren, how greatly you should prize the gift which the faith has bestowed upon you. You have a dear and most tender mother in heaven, and by the instincts of your religion you are taught to honour and to love her. The only question which you have to consider is how you can best show your love. You must find out what will be most pleasing to her, and offer her this tribute of your homage and gratitude. Now I need not remind you that you will best please her by leading a holy and just life. You will best gain her patronage by imitating the life of Jesus, and by honouring our Divine Lord especially in the most holy Sacrament. What was she herself ever wont to do? To converse as often as she could with Jesus; to follow Him wherever He went; to walk in His footsteps; to stand beside His cross; to make Him the beginning and the ending of all her thoughts, words, and deeds. Now, in order to love Mary worthily, and to show that love, you must repeat in yourselves the life of Christ. You belong to Christ, and you must do as He would do in your place, and under your circumstances. As

members of Christ, you have to continue His life on earth. And you know how deeply He loved Mary; how, for her sake, He wrought His first miracle; how, at her bidding, He left the doctors in the temple, that He might return with her to Nazareth; how, when she needed Him, He ceased His preaching, that He might wait upon her; and how His very last thoughts upon the cross were for her solace and consolation. Do you continue this love of Christ for His mother, and show it, as He did, by entire obedience to her will. Keep her image in your heart. Let her memory and her name hallow every action of the day, be your strength in temptation, and your comfort in trial. Meditate on her prerogatives; try to realise to yourself the vastness of her dignity as the Mother of God. Practise devotions to her immaculate heart, to her seven sorrows, and her seven joys. Wear the scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, and be a devout member of the confraternity. Carry about with you your beads, and let not a day pass by without meditating on one or more of the sacred mysteries of the Rosary. Next to the Divine Office, there has been no mode of prayer more highly sanctioned by the Church than the Rosary. The devout in all ages since its introduction, have made it a part of their daily devotions. Originally introduced as a special weapon against heresy,

the Church has had recourse to this prayer in every period of trouble. Innumerable have been the mercies and graces granted in answer to the Rosary; so that every Catholic ought to be familiar with it. I have sometimes heard persons speak as if the Rosary and its mysteries were intended only for those who were unable to read. But there cannot be a greater mistake. In this almost inspired mode of prayer, there is food for the learned and the unlearned alike. It is adapted to all. The highest contemplative can use it, and find material for his contemplations; the youngest child can use it as a prayer suited to his tender years. Never, therefore, be ashamed to be seen with the beads in your hands. Make a frequent and steady use of this holy prayer. Remember that it is always an advantage to choose those forms and mode of prayer which are commonly used in the Church. They are more pleasing to God and His saints than new and untried devotions. Besides, they have already won so much from His goodness and love. The day of judgment will reveal how many owe their salvation to the simple prayer of the Rosary; how many have been led on through it to a higher state of perfection; how many, through its instrumentality, have been rewarded with a crown of perseverance. It is, therefore, better for us to keep to the old and long-tried ways of Christian

devotion, than to wander aside into unknown paths. And our Blessed Lady will love us the more, if, with the many thousands who have preceded us in faith and love, we make daily use of a prayer which she herself has so peculiarly sanctioned. In one way or other, let us make manifest our devotion to her, and she will without fail grant us the desire of our hearts. And what else ought the desire of our hearts to be, except that we may day by day acquire a deeper love of the most holy Mother of God, and day by day serve her with more fidelity?

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

---

I.

LECTURES ON THE INSPIRATION  
AND  
INTERPRETATION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

*Second Edition. In the Press.*

LONDON : RICHARDSON & SON.

---

II.

THE IRISH IN ENGLAND.

LONDON : DOLMAN & Co.

---

III.

THE PATRONS OF ERIN ;  
Or, Some Account of the Lives of St. Patrick and St. Brigid.

LONDON : DOLMAN & Co.

---

IV.

OUR CATHOLIC CHILDREN.

*A Sermon.*

LONDON : BURNS & LAMBERT.





1





